

THE NEW YEAR DAYS

THEY CELEBRATE THE OCCASION FREQUENTLY BY KNOCKING OFF WORK AND HOLDING FUNERALS. SOME BURY THEIR DEAD, SOME BURN THEM AND SOME FEED THE CORPSES TO BUZZARDS.

INDIA beats the world for the number and variety of its New Year days and this is so because of the large number of races and religions.

When a traveler who expects to spend some time in the country goes to the bank with his letter of credit, usually a card is handed him on which is printed the various holidays. This is for his convenience, so that he will not let himself get out of funds and go to the bank in a hurry, only to find it closed on account of some holiday. The holiday may be Christian, Mohammedan or that of any one of the numerous Hindu sects.

When the usual card was given me in Bombay, says a writer, I noted the number of these holidays which were ascribed to New Year. They did not exactly bear out the humorous description of every day in the year as a New Year day, but there seemed hardly a month of the Christian calendar which did not have at least one New Year designated, and in some months there were more.

Kaleidoscopic Bombay observes all these New Year days because the stream of Asiatic life which circulates through it includes all the civilization and all the races and religions of the Orient; with some additions from the Occident. The spirit is one of catholicity.

All the races and all the religious sects observe the New Year of the Christian calendar, because British rule of India is reflected in this day; but they also observe the New Year of the different races and religions among themselves, at least to the extent of knocking off work.

Whether in Bombay or Benares, the monkey temple has its throng of Hindu worshippers, and the Mohammedans often are not unwilling to share in the observance to the extent of foregoing their business activities. The Hindus on their part are apt to think it a shame to work on a Mohammedan New Year day when the Moslem population may be thronging the Jumma Musjid mosque. So it goes all round the circle of New Year holidays.

There is a simple arithmetical method of calculating the time from the Hegira in the terms of the Christian era, but the easier way is to accept without question the fact that such and such a day is the New Year of the Mohammedan era. Similarly, the New Year of the Buddhists and the Brahmins and the Jains and the Sikhs may be accepted without bothering about the calendar.

The British New Year in Bombay, or Calcutta, or Delhi is much the same as in England. While the Christian New Year is formal and stately on account of British authority, it has less standing than the New Year of the Parsees, because it is a single day's observance, while the Parsees take two days. The year I happened to be in Bombay was the Parsee Yazdegerdi, 1276, and the New Year days came on September 13 and 14.

On this day I was afforded the opportunity of witnessing the Parsee religious observances, or Zoroastrian services. It was in the Allibagh, on the Charni road. Their churches or temples of worship are free from architectural pretensions without and within. They are more like an ordinary hall.

In this temple the women were gathered at one end of the room and the men at the other end. In the space between was a stand holding a lamp with the eternal fire under glass. The flame was very clear. A venerable bearded priest stood beside the lamp. His discourse was earnest and solemn. Both man and woman hearers were very attentive.

THE BRAVEST FLOWERS.

December is not all bleak winter here, by any means. The earlier days are often mild and pleasant, and the harder reminders of the garden year take prompt advantage of any sun-encouragement. During the first week of the month I have found scabious, candytuft and galliardia in comfortable bloom. Of course, I expect to see pansies opening every month in the year, and have not often been disappointed. Then the wallflowers, bless them! do not regard winter as of any importance until at last Jack Frost repeatedly freezes them into insensibility. And on Christmas day, in the happy Breeze Hill garden years, I have found and gloriously taken to the home guests assembled, flowers of the panny, the English daisy and the wallflowers. These latest flowers are doubly appreciated, and have an appeal not possessed by the great, rich greenhouse roses one buys.—J. Horace McFarland in the Country Magazine.

LONDON LIGHTS ARE GOSTLY.

At Willesden police court Philip Horgeshelm, a German baker (naturalized) of Malvern road, Kilburn, was fined \$25 for failing to reduce his shop lighting.

It was stated by the police that the defendant had a very bright light in his window, and every time he was cautioned he put up a shade, removing it again immediately the officer turned his back. When told that he would be fined he replied: "Well, I must sell my cakes." On the night of the trial his light was particularly bright.

The defendant sent his wife, also a German, to say that he was too busy baking bread for his customers to attend the court.

A fine of \$25 was imposed, which the wife at once paid.—London

A motor-driven wheel that can be inserted in place of the front ordinary bicycle to convert it into a motor cycle has been inven-



NEW YEAR ZEMELI WORSHIP



BURNING THE DEAD IN INDIA

flame was very clear. A venerable bearded priest stood beside the lamp. His discourse was earnest and solemn. Both man and woman hearers were very attentive.

The ceremonies of worship are quite simple, but the mysteries of the faith may be less so. The Parsees who have been educated in England and many of those whose English education has been obtained in Bombay resent the designation of fire worshippers.

One of them gave me a monograph, written by a Parsee barrister in London, which explained the creed of the followers of Zoroaster as one of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, with the sacred flame as a symbol of the effluence of the deity. It is not denied, however, that contact with the Hindus and Mohammedans has caused corruptions to creep into the creed. The Hindus and Moslems regard the Parsees as fire worshippers.

It was on a New Year day that I drove out to Malabar hill, where are located the Towers of Silence, or the Parsee cemetery. Every traveler takes this drive. It is past the other cemeteries, Christian and Mohammedan burial grounds and the Hindu burning ghat. The cemetery of the Christians is no longer used, but on almost any day there will be Mohammedan funerals and Hindu cremations.

On this day there were two Mohammedan funerals and three parties of Hindu mourners, with their respective burdens at the burning ghat. Malabar hill is the choice spot overlooking the Arabian sea. Within the cemetery grounds are flagstone steps, shaded walks and arbors and bowers. A luxuriant vegetation covers the rocks, and there is everything that goes to make a beautiful garden of flowers.

The towers of Silence, of which there are five, are hardly towers at all. They are about 275 feet in circumference and perhaps 25 feet high. The material is whitewashed stone and cement or mortar. A pear approach to the towers is not allowed to strangers to the Parsee creed, nor is entrance permitted to the fire temple, where the sacred fire is kept alive and seven kinds of incense are burned.

A model of the towers is shown in the registry room and an attendant explains them to visitors. The attendant explained to me the circular rows in which the bodies were placed—one for the children; one for the women and one for the men. When the bodies have been stripped of their fleshly covering by the vultures, which takes perhaps half an hour, the bones remain for a while, and are then dropped into a well in the center, which is provided with drains and water flushes. Charcoal is the chief purifier.

On this New Year day there was a Parsee funeral, which could be observed only at a respectful distance. There were the four professional body bearers, with the bier on their shoulders, and a procession of perhaps fifty

mourners in their white robes walking two abreast, each pair holding a handkerchief. The Parsee accounts say that the body is received by two bearded attendants at the entrance to the towers, and that by them the shroud is removed and then vultures do the rest. This is probably what happened that day.

All I could note on this occasion was a sudden movement of the vultures in the palm trees. There seemed to be hundreds of them. They paused for a minute on the outer edge of one of the towers and then disappeared within. In a few minutes they reappeared.

The Parsee method of disposing of the dead is, perhaps, as the Parsees say, more sanitary than the Christian burial in the earth, or even than the Hindu cremation. It meets the tenet of their faith that fire, water and earth are too sacred to be polluted. But the western mind cannot become accustomed to it.

In conclusion, it may be said that there are other New Year observances in India besides the New Year of the Christians, Mohammedans, Hindus and Parsees. There is a Chinese colony in Bettinck street, Calcutta, and the Chinese there observe the New Year as they do in the United States, or in any other section of the world in which they are found.

AUSTRIAN YOUTHS IN WAR

The Austrian newspapers are devoting considerable space at present to the part played by schoolboys in the present war. They are affectionately termed the "war boys" and in the operations in eastern Galicia they were of great assistance to the troops.

In some of the artillery battles, especially those which centered around Czernowitz and Weinberg, schoolboys in large numbers braved the shells and carried water and ammunition for the troops. After a battle they would go over the field and gather pieces of shrapnel and the shells of cartridges to be made over again into ammunition. Occasionally a boy thus sacrificed his life, but this did not deter the ardor of his companions.

Many of the boys followed the infantry regiments and fought and slept with the soldiers in the trenches. The boys who remained at home took the place of their fathers and brothers who were at the front.

The story is told of a fourteen-year-old youngster who all alone managed the biggest hotel in Czernowitz. He looked personally after his own cashier and bookkeeper. Other boys peddled goods among the soldiers and so earned a good living for their mothers.

Some became guides, and many an army automobile had as guide a bright schoolboy who sat beside the chauffeur and showed him the right road.

It is said that when the history of this war is written the schoolboys of Austria will deserve a prominent place in its pages.

Beautiful European City.

Agram, in Croatia, is one of the most popular cities in Europe, because years ago its public-spirited citizens got behind a movement and carried out a plan for an extensive park. "The city has a population of only about 100,000 persons, but everywhere it is known and spoken of as the city of beautiful parks. Few persons pass through on a train that do not return. They are drawn back by reason of the beauty of the park. The city spent more than one million dollars to set it off properly."

Intercolle Strife.

"This luncheon proprietor advertises ham and eggs at war prices." "I don't see what war has to do with the price of ham and eggs." "It has a great deal in this case. He's at war with a rival restaurant across the street."

Proved Fact.

"So your play is all about a prize fight?" "Yes; I was determined the critics wouldn't have a chance to say it wasn't a punch in it."

only one of many clever used by Y. Nakane, merchant, when he made on at the customhouse say carried only \$400 worth of

investigation of his "merchandise" revealed that he had more than \$5,000.

Nakane arrived in San Francisco aboard the Tomyo Maru and declared to the customs inspector that he had \$400 worth of pearls in a small jewel case. An examination of the case showed that it had a false bottom, and pearls valued at \$1,000 were revealed with the destruction of the case. This was the first lot to be discovered.

While the jewel case was being taken apart Nakane drew from his pocket a dainty Japanese tobacco box and proceeded to roll a cigarette. The beauty of the box attracted the attention of Wardell, who asked to see it at closer range. The box, when examined, revealed another \$1,000 worth of the precious gems. Nakane removed his coat to assist in the work of unpacking his cases.

Again Wardell was attracted by the beauty of a silk vest and made an examination and found that in the center of each of the buttons was set a small pearl, which was so near the color of the shell-like buttons that the gems could only be detected by an expert.

In the bottom of one of the merchant's trunks the inspector found a toy dog carefully wrapped in tissue paper. Nakane explained that it was to be a gift to a child relative here.

An examination of the outside of the toy revealed nothing; finally the tip of the tail was removed with a pair of scissors and it was found to be filled with pearls. A like find was made in the dog's nose.

Nakane then confessed he had tried to smuggle the jewels into this country. The gems were confiscated.

"Jennie Catfish" Dead.

"Jennie Catfish" is dead. In the northeastern part of the city Jennie Catfish was as celebrated as the mufin man of English fame or the old chimney sweep of Charles Lamb's time, states the Philadelphia North American.

Her call, "Any catfish? Any catfish?" has rung through the streets of the city for nearly half a century. Residents of the northeast say they cannot remember when she did not cry her wares night and day. Many remember it mingled with their childish dreams, the shrill, piercing, long-drawn-out wail bringing a picture of a little woman, who always had seemed old, walking swiftly along back streets and alleys with a tray balanced on her head.

To the children she was "Jennie Catfish," which was their translation of her cry. To her neighbors she was Mrs. Amelia Wilson, eighty years old. She had been ill for some time and had been taken care of by a neighbor, who the other day entered her home with a postal from a niece. She found the old woman dead as the result of pneumonia.

Public Defender's Idea.

"What in heaven's name is the use of sending to jail a man who ought to be with his family? What's the use of giving a man a bad name when a good word will set him right?" That was the first public defender to appear in Pittsburgh's police courts asked at the end of his first day's work.

There's no use following that old method, but we've been a long time finding it out. Sending a man to jail is a poor way to take care of the man's family, but it's the way we've taken for ages.

Giving a man a bad name instead of offering him the good word his heart is aching to hear is wasteful, but it was easier, we thought, than the right way. The strange thing about these matters is that the wrong way always seems easier.—Pittsburgh Leader.

Oyster Catches a Duck.

A sheldrake duck, diving into the bay at Smith's Point, L. I., varied life's monotony by capturing an oyster and being captured in turn.

Of course all that the residents of Smith's Point know about the remarkable catch is what they heard from Will Murdock, who took the duck from the Tangle bridge, and who admits he has an excellent reputation for veracity. Will took duck and oyster to the Smith's Point Coast Guard station and exhibited them to prove the story.

Where did he get them? Oh, he caught the duck after the duck had caught the oyster. The fowl pushed its bill into the shell of the oyster, Murdock said, and the bill struck fast.

Useless Question.

"Would your wife vote for you as a candidate for office?" "I don't think there's any use of my bothering my head about that," replied Mr. Moekton. "I don't believe Henrietta would let me run in the first place."

Greatness and Efficiency.

"A great man's mind is superior to envy," remarked the philosopher. "Yes," replied the ordinary person; "it is, if he's great enough to get what he goes after instead of having to see someone else walk off with it."

Sad Awakening.

The young man who fondly believed that two could live upon as little as one arrived reluctantly at a complete realization of the falsity of the theory when the family doctor offers congratulations and says "it is" twins.

DELICATE OPERATION.

The handling of a magazine rifle is a very delicate operation, and those men will perform it best who have had no alcohol.—Sir J. Crichton Browne, M. D.

TO THE VOTER.

Which of your boys do you intend shall stand in the footprints of ruined men? Will you help them to enter a life of woe because of your votes? Oh, no! Oh, no! If you vote for saloons, I verify fear you'll have to support them; so now look here. Which of your boys are you going to give to ruin and death, that saloons may live?

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We do not employ habitual drinkers, and never have, because they are not good workmen.—President White Automobile Company.

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"The repression of drinking that has taken place in industrial establishments has not been altogether of force," says the Pittsburgh Gazette-Times. "Workmen realize the benefit to themselves. There is little complaint against the rules made."

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Not Handicapped There. "And what is your son, William doing, Mrs. B Jones?" asked the visitor. "Oh, Willie, he's an actor and doing very well." "William an actor?" said the visitor. "Why, I thought he was deaf and dumb?" "He is," said Mrs. B Jones, "but that doesn't make any difference. He's playing Hamlet this week in the movies."—New York Times.

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